

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02
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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1859
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 3590

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT IN
SUBJECT: THE POLLING SCHEDULE

FOLLOWING IS A REVIEW OF THE SCHEDULES FOR VOTING,
BALLOT COUNTING, ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS, AND
CONVENING OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT.

1. VOTING: VOTING WILL TAKE PLACE MARCH 16, 18, 19,
AND 20.

---ON THE FIRST DAY, MORE THAN HALF OF THE ANTICIPATED
320 MILLION VOTERS WILL CAST THEIR BALLOTS IN 21 OF
THE 22 STATES AND ALL NINE UNION TERRITORIES, VOTING
COMPLETELY IN 300 CONSTITUENCIES AND PARTIALLY IN 54
MORE. VOTING WILL BE COMPLETED MARCH 16 IN EIGHT STATES
AND SEVEN TERRITORIES.

--- ON MARCH 18, AN ESTIMATED 30 MILLION VOTERS WILL
VOTE COMPLETELY IN 34 CONSTITUENCIES AND PARTIALLY
IN ANOTHER 31 CONSTITUENCIES IN UTTAR PRADESH AND BIHAR.
VOTING WILL ALSO BE COMPLETED FOR THE ONE SEAT IN
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NAGALAND.

--- ON MARCH 19, ABOUT 90 MILLION VOTERS WILL GO TO
THE POLLS TO CONCLUDE THE VOTING IN 129
CONSTITUENCIES (INCLUDING SOME WHERE POLLING BEGAN EARLIER)
IN 10 STATES AND TWO UNION TERRITORIES. IN KERALA, VOTING
FOR BOTH PARLIAMENT AND STATE ASSEMBLY SEATS WILL TAKE PLACE ON

THIS ONE DAY.

--- MARCH 20, THE VOTING WILL BE CONCLUDED IN THE REMAINING 26 CONSTITUENCIES IN UTTAR PRADESH AND BIHAR. THERE WILL BE NO BALLOTING FOR THE ONE SEAT IN SIKKIM AND ONE OF THE TWO SEATS IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH WHERE CONGRESS MPS HAVE BEEN RETURNED UNOPPOSED. IN ADDITION, BECAUSE OF WEATHER CONDITIONS VOTING FOR ONE OF THE SEATS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH WILL NOT BE COMPLETED UNTIL MAY AND THE LADDAKH CONSTITUENCY IN KASHMIR WILL NOT VOTE UNTIL JUNE.

2. CAMPAIGN RESTRICTIONS: ELECTION RULES SPECIFY THAT PUBLIC CAMPAIGNING IN A "POLLING AREA" MUST END 48 HOURS BEFORE THE CLOSE OF POLLS ON THE SCHEDULED ELECTION DAY. THUS IN THOSE CONSTITUENCIES WHERE THE POLLS WILL CLOSE AT 5:00 P.M. ON MARCH 16, CAMPAIGNING IS PROHIBITED AFTER 5:00 P.M. ON MARCH 14. HOWEVER, CAMPAIGNING WILL CONTINUE IN KERALA AND IN SOME CONSTITUENCIES OF ANOTHER 10 STATES WHICH VOTE ON THE 19TH UNTIL THE EVENING OF MARCH 17, AND UNTIL THE EVENING OF MARCH 18 IN THE 16 CONSTITUENCIES OF UP AND BIHAR WHICH VOTE ON THE 20TH. HOWEVER, DOOR TO DOOR CANVASSING OF VOTERS IS NOT PROHIBITED EVEN ON THE POLLING DAY.

3. COUNTING THE BALLOTS: THE COUNTING OF VOTES WILL BEGIN AT 8:00 A.M. MARCH 20 IN ALL CONSTITUENCIES EXCEPT THOSE IN BIHAR AND UP WHERE VOTING CONTINUES ON THE 20TH. FIRST RESULTS WILL NOT BE OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED, UNCLASSIFIED

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HOWEVER, UNTIL ALL BALLOTING IS COMPLETED. COUNTING IS SUPERVISED BY THE RETURNING OFFICER, WHO IS USUALLY THE DISTRICT MAGISTRATE, AND COUNTING USUALLY TAKES PLACE AT THE DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS WHERE THE BALLOT BOXES FROM THE MANY POLLING STATIONS (380,000 NATIONWIDE) HAVE BEEN KEPT UNDER GUARD. ACCORDING TO THE CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER, THE FIRST RESULTS WILL BE AVAILABLE BY THE EVENING OF MARCH 20 AND THE FINAL RESULTS BY THE EVENING OF MARCH 22. FROM THE EVENING OF MARCH 20, UNOFFICIAL "TRENDS REPORTS" WILL START TO CIRCULATE INDICATING WHO IS LEADING IN EACH RACE.

4. THE NEW PARLIAMENT: IF FINAL RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED THE EVENING OF MARCH 22, AS ANTICIPATED, T. SWAMINATHAN, THE CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER WILL ISSUE THE NECESSARY NOTIFICATION THE NEXT MORNING DECLARING THE NEW LOK SABHA DULY CONSTITUTED. SWAMINATHAN HAS SAID THAT HE EXPECTS THAT THE ACTING PRESIDENT WILL THEN SUMMON THE NEW LOK SABHA INTO SESSION ON MARCH 25.

(IN ANY EVENT, THE LOK SABHA MUST MEET TO PASS THE VOTE OF ACCOUNT BY MARCH 31 IN ORDER TO PERMIT GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING APRIL 1). IN THE INTERIM TWO DAYS, THE VARIOUS PARTIES WILL MEET TO ELECT THEIR LEADERS. CUSTOMARILY, THE PRESIDENT INVITES THE LEADER OF THE LARGEST PARTY WITH AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OR DEEMED CAPABLE OF MUSTERING A MAJORITY TO FORM THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION IS SILENT ON THE QUESTION OF TRANSFERRING EXECUTIVE POWER FROM ONE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS TO ANOTHER. IN THE NEHRU ERA, THE CONVENTION DEVELOPED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER RESIGNED AFTER THE MAJORITY PARTY ELECTED ITS LEADER, IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE CONTINUITY OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE PRACTICE HAS BEEN FOR A NEW COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, AT LEAST IN PART, TO BE SWORN IN BEFORE THE LOK SABHA MEETS, SOMETIMES ON THE MORNING OF THE OPENING SESSION. THE FIRST TWO DAYS OF THE LOK SABHA SESSION ARE USUALLY DEVOTED TO

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SWEARING IN MEMBERS AND ELECTING A NEW SPEAKER. THE OLD SPEAKER CONDUCTS THE PROCEEDINGS UNTIL HE IS RE-ELECTED OR A SUCCESSOR IS CHOSEN. THE FIRST OCCASION FOR A VOTE INDICATING THE PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR A NEW PM USUALLY COMES ON THE VOTE OF THANKS TO THE PRESIDENT DURING THE FIRST TWO DAYS.SCHNEIDER

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